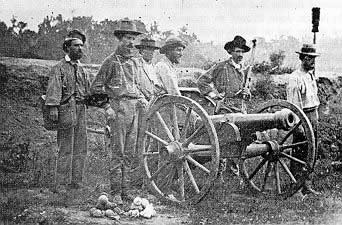
# Steps Leading to the Civil War – THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT

In 1820 the Missouri Compromise provided that all territories north of the southern boundary of Missouri, with the exception of Missouri itself, were to be closed to slavery. The goal was to create an automatic system for determining whether a given territory would be free or slave so that the issue would no longer arise in Congress. The Compromise worked as intended for a quarter of a century. Territories were admitted to statehood two by two so that the number of slave and free states remained equal.  
  
This issue was complicated with the addition of the Kansas and Nebraska territories. In 1854, both territories were organized under the rule of popular sovereignty, meaning the residents of the territories would get to vote on whether they wanted slavery. Nebraska was so far north that its future as a free state was never in question. But Kansas was next to the slave state of Missouri. In an era that would come to be known as "Bleeding Kansas," the territory would become a battleground over the slavery question.   
  
The reaction from the North was immediate and northerners went to Kansas to secure it as a free territory. By the summer of 1855, approximately 1,200 New Englanders had made the journey to the new territory, armed to fight for freedom.   
  
Rumors had spread through the South that 20,000 Northerners were descending on Kansas, and in November 1854, thousands of armed Southerners, mostly from Missouri, poured over the line to vote for a proslavery congressional delegate. Only half the ballots were cast by registered voters.. The proslavery forces won the election.  
  
On March 30, 1855, another election was held to choose members of the territorial legislature. The Missourians, or "Border Ruffians," as they were called, again poured over the line. Most settlers who had come to Kansas from the North and the South only wanted to homestead in peace. They were not interested in the conflict over slavery, but they found themselves in the midst of a battleground. Violence erupted throughout the territory.   
  
There had been several attacks during this time, primarily of proslavery against Free State men. People were tarred and feathered, kidnapped, killed. But now the violence escalated. On May 21, 1856, a group of proslavery men entered Lawrence, where they burned the Free State Hotel, destroyed two printing presses, and ransacked homes and stores. In retaliation, the fiery abolitionist John Brown led a group of men on an attack at Pottawatomie Creek. The group, which included four of Brown's sons, dragged five proslavery men from their homes and hacked them to death.   
  
In September of 1856, a new territorial governor, John W. Geary, arrived in Kansas and began to restore order. The last major outbreak of violence was the Marais des Cynges massacre, in which Border Ruffians killed five Free State men. In all, approximately 55 people died in "Bleeding Kansas."  
  
Several attempts were made to draft a constitution which Kansas could use to apply for statehood. Some versions were proslavery, others free state. Finally, a fourth convention met at Wyandotte in July 1859, and adopted a free state constitution. Kansas applied for admittance to the Union. However, the proslavery forces in the Senate strongly opposed its free state status, and stalled its admission. Only in 1861, after the Confederate states seceded, did the constitution gain approval and Kansas become a state.

Your Job: Your job is to teach this topic as completely as possible to the class. You will have the following picture to assist you:

[](http://www.mrvanduyne.com/CompConf/images/BleedingKansas02_jpg.jpg)

Missouri “border ruffians” responsible for some of the violence in “Bleeding Kansas”

Map showing Kansas and Nebraska territories, in relation to the Missouri Compromise line

**You should include the following information in your presentation:**

* Explain the concept of “popular sovereignty”
* How did the decision to decide slavery using popular sovereignty result in violence in Kansas?
* Share the details of 2-3 incidences of violence in “bleeding Kansas”?
* What eventually happened to Kansas?
* Why would this have led to friction between the North and South?